

## Interview H0059: with Sandutsang, Rinchen [tib. sa 'du tshang rin chen], (India, 26 August 1989) : Part No. 2 of 2

*Sandutsang Rinchen who was a member of a rich Khamba trading family who shifted their base of operations to Lhasa in 1918-20. The interviewee tells how he became a lay official in the Tibetan Government and about his appointment to the Tibetan Foreign Bureau and about some of the moves the Tibetan government tried to make in 1950-51. He also explained how he went with Sursur Dzasa to India as his interpreter to meet Nehru and later how he also went as the interpreter when Kheme and Lhautara met Nehru on their way to Beijing in 1951. The interviewee also discusses how the Tibetan Foreign Office was merged into the Chinese Foreign Office. The subject also tells how the Chinese criticized him for having relations with the Indian and the Nepalese Consulate members [in Lhasa] and how he quit the Foreign Office job and was appointed by the Tibetan government to be the head of a new transportation office that was in charge of the Tibetan Government's trucks bought from India. He discussed its work and the difficulty he had getting a permit to go to India. He also talks about being the guide for the King of Sikkim when he came to Lhasa to invite the Dalai Lama to the Buddha Jayantii Celebration.*

Q

As I mentioned to you, we are writing a history book and whether you want to start from 1949 or 1950 it doesn't matter, but where were you at that time.

A

I was in Lhasa. In 1948, in the 7th Tibetan month which was probably around May or June, I entered government service. I immediately became a "staff" member [tib. las bya]

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at the [Tibetan Government's] Foreign Office. In 1950, there was danger from the Chinese so from Tibet about 3 different representatives [unfinished]. The Chinese military had not as yet come all the way up to this side, but it had arrived in Kham. The Chinese were constantly announcing on the radio that they were going to liberate Tibet. At that time, the person who was listening to the news was Heinrich Harrer. Harrer had to make reports of the news. We translated it and through the Foreign Office we handed it to the Kashag. The Chinese were saying that they were going to liberate [us], right, but if we fought them, we couldn't manage them, right? So while we were staying like this, Chamdo was lost. Then we got scared and got alarmed. The Chinese said that they were going to come peacefully. They said that if you oppose us, we will have to come forcefully. So they were threatening us a lot.

Q

Were the Chinese saying that they were going to peacefully liberate Tibet even before they came to Chamdo?

A

No. They were not saying that they were going to do it peacefully. They [just] said that they were going to liberate [Tibet]. However, since people in Tibet did not have much experience, you know, they were not paying too much attention. They did not seem to regard it as a great emergency or an extremely dangerous situation. The reason being that even when Chamdo was lost, the Kashag was hosting the Kashag's [annual] picnic [tib. thugs spro] and the summer picnic for the lay officials [tib. drung spyi dbyar skyid] was also going on. That's why people like Richardson used to be amazed saying, "My Gosh, [tib. 'er zi], even when the country is about to be lost and the Chinese army has arrived at the border, you guys are having a picnic for about a week, how is this"? . Richardson used to come to the Foreign Office and through us used to communicate with the Kashag. So at that time, it just happened to coincide with the summer picnics.

So at that time about 3 separate representative [groups] [tib. don gcod] [were sent]. One was to Nepal, another to India, then, one to England and yet another to the USA. I think it was four.

Q

Did people go to the States?

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A

No they did not, but people were selected to go. After they were selected, then the only means to communicate was through [Dekyilingka](#) [the Indian Government's office]. We had to contact the various governments, right? Most of them said don't come. In India, was it Yuthok, now I can't remember, but Sursur [tib. zur zur] Dzasa was the Foreign Minister [tib. phyi rgyal blon chen]. His assistant [tib. las rogs] was Liushar. Sursur Kungnö Dzasa went to India, I wonder if he actually did go to India, I can't recall clearly. But at that time I remember that I was appointed as the interpreter for whoever was going to Nepal. Anyway, later, towards the end of 1950, I think it was just after the fall of Chamdo, Sursur went and I was with him. All the important documents concerning foreign affairs were handed over to me. These filled about two or three boxes. He handed them over to me and told me to bring them with me later. I think [Sursu] Kungö went a day or two ahead. We later met up at Phari. So I brought them and at Sikkim they were sealed and left with the [Indian] Political Officer. Then [we] went down to Delhi and - I wonder who we met? I think [we] met Nehru. What they advised was as expected. That it is better to negotiate and that there was no point in fighting. Not only can't you handle the Chinese, but there will be a lot of hardship for the country and a lot of people will die and the country will be spoiled. So this is what they advised. So before [Sursur Dzasa] left, the Dalai Lama had already arrived at [Yadong](#). So he came to [Yadong](#) and consulted. In the meantime, [Shakabpa](#) was in India and there seems to have been some plans for him to go to China, but this did not work out. I can't recall the reason now - however he could not go. He didn't get a visa or something. Oh yes [answer not finished]

Q

Shakabpa went to Delhi, right?

A

Shakabpa's going to Delhi occurred before Sursur went there. The reason was that at first [Shakabpa](#) was contacted and something was said about going to see how things are - anyway something was said. Then Sursur went and I was with him at Delhi. Then Sursur returned to [Yadong](#) to brief the Dalai Lama. All the other delegations were rejected [by the proposed countries] and they were told not to come. So they were not able to go.

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Q

Then earlier, you said something about Nehru saying something about a lot of soldiers.

A

This was later. After [Sursur] went to [Yadong](#) to consult, at [Yadong](#) they discussed and told Ngabö to go directly from there [from Chamdo]. As his helper, from Lhasa, [Sambo](#) Depön and Nendrön Thubten Lengmön [tib. thub bstan legs smon] or something were sent. He was the [nendrön](#) (ADC) of [Taktra](#) Labrang. Since [Taktra](#) Labrang was the regent, so he was like the Drönyerchommo of the Regent. Then from India, Kheme [tib. [khe](#) smad] Dzasa and [Trunyichemmo](#) Lhautara were appointed. As their interpreter and staff officer, I was told to go. From there [Tibet] there was also [Yabshi](#) Depön Takla who was to be the interpreter in Chinese. I was in India and was told to go with the two of them. So the two of them came to Delhi and met Nehru. There was a letter for Nehru from the Kashag. It was not from the Dalai Lama. It was the Kashag's letter. It was opened in front of me and it was typed on Tibetan paper. I remember that there was an ink blotch on the side. I was feeling ashamed and wished that they had retyped it. . I mean, it should be considered very important since the letter was for the Indian Prime Minister and it was from our Kashag. With an ink blotch like that. It was on a folded Tibetan paper.

I didn't read it, but it must have stated that they are going to China and so please advise. Anyway, that was what the talk was about. So what Nehru said was just that. That it is good that you are going to negotiate and peacefully try and settle the matter. That there is no point in fighting. You can't manage them and your country will come to harm and a lot of people will be killed. So if you negotiate, it will turn out alright. The most important thing is that in Tibet the people should not suffer and the country should not have difficulties. A large Chinese military presence in Tibet is not good and will cause a lot of hardship for the country and its population and you must discuss that there should not be a large military presence in Tibet. So this Nehru said "quite seriously" [tib. nan po].

So the representatives left and then the 17-Point Agreement was decided upon. I was not at the discussions since I was not a representative, but only staff. Ngabö was the main person, then next was Dzasa Kheme, [Trunyichemmo](#) Lhautara, the Nendrön and then [Sambo](#) Depön. The interpreter was [Yabshi](#) Takla Phüntso Tashi [tib. phun tshogs bkra shis] who was also a "staff" officer in the Foreign Office. He was not yet a [depön](#), but a junior 4th rank official called Senamba [tib. sras nam pa]. They met many times. I think

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you know there were many things like how the Chinese army was to go to Tibet and how their supplies were to be met. And also political matters. So it was not a simple thing and they had to meet quite a few times. So one day when they were discussing about the base [tib. gzhi rtsa] of the matter [Trunyichemmo](#) Lhautara said something like it would not be okay for the Chinese to come to Tibet and interfere in [our] politics, or something like that. I don't know exactly the way he said it, but the Chinese were very angry. Among them was a prominent official. I think at that time he belonged to the Internal Affairs [tib. nang srid] department. His name was Li Weihan. Later, he became head of the Nationalities Bureau [tib. mi rigs las khungs spyi khyab]. He stomped his feet and said, "You better be careful, otherwise we can just send one telegram [tib. lcags 'phrin] telling the soldiers to go; and we can do whatever we like. What are you talking about? We are talking peacefully and telling you in a nice way so that you will not have difficulties in your country. Your talk is such that it can spoil things. We can get rid of you in one day." So they [representatives] were talking about this among themselves in quite a state of amazement. The fact that the Chinese were "bullying" [tib. btsan po] can be clearly seen from such talk. So it was a question of - yes, it's good if you do it and if not, then, we will forcefully liberate [Tibet]. "There's nothing to it. We can just send you back and send in the army". So they passed the time listening to what they [the Chinese] said. There was no way to make any changes in the larger issues, but the smaller ones they tried to get as much vantage points as possible. And that was it! All of that was put into writing and signed.

The seals were all made up [in Beijing]; they were not ones that they brought them with them. You know, there were sealing the documents and doing something? In the old tradition, seals were used [on documents] right? Most probably seals were brought from Tibet. From Chamdo there was the Doji's seal, and from [Yadong](#) seals were probably sent, but the Chinese made the seals. They could make the seals immediately; they carved their names [the delegate's] and then it was signed.

Q

The seals were made with their names, right?

A

I think so, but I can't remember.

Q

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Some say that false government seals were made. Others that name seals were made.

A

Whatever one wants to say, even if it was government seals, it was counterfeit because the actual government seal was not used. It was made in Beijing. It was up to them. If they said you have to use your own name, then they will make name seals. If they said that each representative had to sign his name and then a common seal was to be used, then they will make a government seal. So it was up to them, but I can't remember now. One can know by looking at the copy of the document.

Q

Yes. It is said that Ngabö brought the Doji seal, but it was not used.

A

Yes, he probably brought it. He definitely brought it. But probably it was not used. It was not used because one would use a common seal and not just the Doji seal. If it was work concerning only the Doji, then he could seal it [with that]. But it was not. It was the country's work. The Doji was there and the country's representatives were there, so a common [tib. spyi thog] seal had to be used.

Q

Before the 17-Point Agreement was even discussed, it is said that they wanted the Panchen Lama to be recognized [by the Tibetan Government] Did they say that?

A

That I don't remember. I had no talks regarding that. But it is very likely that they brought that up. Before the liberation began, the Panchen Lama had already left for Beijing. When the Chinese army came to Kham, it is said that he sent a telegram to congratulate the founding of the PRC. So regarding the Panchen [Tsang](#) [the Panchen's entourage], they definitely must have asked for this. During that period, the time had come and so they must have said that he is the right one [the right incarnation of the later Panchen Lama] and he has to be recognized. In reality, there were two other candidates, and so from the three, the golden urn has to be used in Tibet and three of them had to come up [to Lhasa].

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So his recognition was based on Chinese power and not something recognized by the government [of Tibet].

Q

Some say that before any talks began, they wanted to talk about it [the Panchen Lama].

A

Oh, they won't consider this to be any big issue. At first [the Agreement] is considered most important and then among the various articles. So there were be discussions about politics and religion, like, that there will be freedom of worship, etc; and in this the Panchen will be discussed. So they must have definitely said that the Panchen is here and that he has to be taken to Tibet. So they must have said it at that time, but to put that as the first condition; you know they are dealing with the matters relating to a treaty with a country and so they would not consider the Panchen Lama to be that important. They would first be concerned with the matters about how to come to Tibet. Then, as an aside, you know there will be a lot of talking about internal matters, foreign matters, and religion. So when there was a connection with religion, then the Panchen Lama will be discussed. But they must have definitely brought up the subject. If they had not, then, the two other candidates had already come to Tibet, to Lhasa. One was from Pagshö [tib. dpa' shod], the other, I can't recall. So this Panchen Lama was to also come to Lhasa and then the golden urn would be used. So this never came about (laughter). The two others were just left there.

Q

My feeling was that they would consider this to be a very important issue because later, the [labrang](#) was made separate.

A

Yes, they would consider it as important because their actual religious policy is that they will never accept the religion. Just now, they were just making things look nice and at that time they were used to make problems between the government and [labrang](#), a situation that already had existing antagonisms [tib. 'khon 'gras]. So they found a toy to play this up.

Q



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In the 17-Point Agreement there was the word, "local government" [tib. sa gnas srid gzhung]. Were there any discussions on that?

A

There must have been. I was not at the talks and so did not know many of the details. Anyway, they say the local government and the motherland [tib. mes po'i rgyal khab] to show that it [Tibet] has always been a part of China. Even if it is just one word they will do their utmost to show that Tibet is part of China. Mainly, we did not have much "choice" [tib. gdam ga] .

So they did their best to not lose much of the power of the [Tibetan] government and that religion will not be harmed. They said in their constitution that there is freedom of religion and that the People's Liberation Army will not even take a needle or thread, but in actuality there isn't any, right? So these are in the Agreement. Also it said that the People's Liberation Army will go to Tibet and they will not take even a needle or a thread. So all these are just for show. Later they went and took out all the stored grains of the government . All the stored tea was taken out. They kept on asking us to make loans, giving some money. They said, "You have to help us the People's Liberation Army just now because things have not come from China and that later we will repay you". Anyway, whatever it was, we had to feed all the soldiers. So there was all this talk in the 17-Point Agreement of not taking a needle or thread, but they never implemented it. Even the politics of Tibet and the power and status of the Dalai Lama will remain and so on.

Q

Did Ngabö say that he wanted to consult with [Yadong](#) or did he think that some of the officials views were questionable and so he thought that it was better to decide right there and then.

A

Oh, he would not say that. It is just not possible for him to decide without consulting and just decide. We have sent [a telegram].

Q

Were [people] sent to request?



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A

Messages were wired, but I don't know whether the Chinese sent them. I don't recall getting any reply. We did bring our "secret code" [tib. gsang hin. tar]. The wire had a code with numbers. There was a book. We sent and received messages in code. He definitely requested. Without requesting he could not decide [due to custom]. Not only was it not possible according to custom, but even from the personal point of view this was a big matter not a small one. Now there is some leeway in the manner it was requested. For example, one has to talk about what the actual discussants were saying, for example, "The Chinese are saying such and such things. We said such things. Now we are at this point. So from our point of view, if we don't do that much they said that they are going to send in the military if that happened." Now Ngabö had already seen the Chinese power at Chamdo and how much they could accomplish. There was no way to oppose them. So Ngabö must have said something like, "Oh, we should accept this because there is no way for us to challenge them. That a lot of lives will be lost and the country will be in great difficulty. So instead of this it was better to quiet things down and try to get the best [deal] and see what can be done down the line." So he must have said something like that. So if everyone is aware of this [the circumstances], then it would make a difference when they gather to decide. Then there would be a reply saying something like, "Oh it's alright, you guys do something like that. That's how it was, and nobody would be in such a position regarding that big decision. How is that possible? No way?"

Q

I just thought that he may be thinking that since the government seal was not there anyway, from the Dalai Lama's side, it really doesn't matter what he [said]. So I was just speculating about his thoughts, I don't know what he was thinking. Anyway, how long did you stay in China.

A

I think it was about a month. Ngabö and Thubten Lengmön, the Nendrön came via Chengdu, Chamdo and then up to Tibet. Kheme Dzasa, Lhautara and us we flew to China, right? So we returned the same way. [Sambo](#) was specially accorded [an exception]. He requested to go via India for [medical] treatment or something like that. So he came with us.

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Q

Ngabö had to come that way?

A

He was the Doji and he had work there. Whatever was happening, he had to finish his term and had to do the accounting and hand over to whoever was the new one [Doji]. His wife and one child were with him. So the others must have been at Chamdo.

Q

Since he was the main person, could it be that the Chinese did not want to risk [what might happen] if he left through India?

A

No, I don't think so.

Q

When the 17-Point Agreement was all done, what was the talk and mood at that time?

A

Well there was nothing. There wasn't anything to do but that. While the talks were going on, there was the fright about what was going to happen. Once it was decided, this fright was subsiding. Whatever it was, it was decided. The Chinese were going to come anyway, but there was not going to be any fighting or war. So this was comforting, even if nothing else was achieved. The fear had subsided and things were a bit more relaxed.

Q

When you were there, what was your work?

A

I didn't have much . I was an interpreter where English was needed. I copied some "letters." For the 17-Point Agreement, some letters had to be written. As the staff member to Ngabö, [Tsendrön](#) Gyentsen Phüntso [tib. rgyal mtshan phun tshogs], who was "staff" officer at Chamdo was also there. So he, [Sambo](#), the Nendrön and myself copied a lot

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of letters. We had to write down a draft copy of The 17-Point Agreement and then we checked, corrected and then wrote it again. And then it had to be printed. Other than this work, I didn't have much. I was just an English interpreter.

Q

When the Agreement was signed, were there signatories from the Chinese side?

A

Yes. The one who first came to Tibet, Zhang Jingwu and others. I think the guy who was the Army Commander [Guohua] Zhang [ch. jun zhang] was there. The the guy from the Nationality Bureau [was there but] I can't remember the others. From our side was Ngabö, Kheme Dzasa, Lhautara, Nendrön and [Sambo](#) Depön. We were five and there were five Chinese.

Q

So once you finished, you came to India?

A

Yes. We came back right away. Once everything was decided and we were coming back, the Chinese representative who came to Tibet, Zhang Jingwu came together with us.

Q

Oh, he was together.

A

Yes. He was together. [But] They went ahead [to Tibet] and I stayed behind. We were together until Guangdong. From there, Kheme and they went ahead.

Q

So up to Guangdong, Zhang Jingwu and all were together.

A

Yes. From Guangdong, Zhang Jingwu, Kheme, Lhautara, Depön Phüntso Tashi went ahead via Hong Kong. No. We were together until Hongkong and from there they went

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ahead. [Sambo](#) Depön and I came later. There was some problem with the air tickets so we stayed behind for a few days. At that time, there were a few Chinese. There was Zhang Jingwu and 10 of his bodyguards who were 18 to 19 years old. Then there was Alo Buzhang, who was one of the more ranking officers and a party member. As the interpreter, there was the [Amdo](#) Phüntso Tashi. Then there was a doctor and few other Chinese.

Q

Phüntso Tashi is Phüntso Wangyal?

A

No. Phüntso Tashi was an interpreter. He was an [Amdowa](#) and later was the main interpreter of Zhang Jingwu. At that time, I remember clearly, there was this Chinese who was a staff member at the Delhi Embassy. He was later the Delhi Ambassador. When I was the Delhi representative, I was told by Depön Phüntso Tashila that he had come and that it was him. He knew some English. At that time, he was young with a round fair face. Later I had to meet him regarding a certain matter and I recognized him immediately. At that time, when he was a cadre at the embassy, his wife gave birth and he had also brought a nanny with him. She was like a villager. I was with Alo Buzhang and a few other young Chinese. We stayed one night in Singapore . Alo Buzhang was a clever guy. He was such an eloquent person. He used to eat in his room and never used to come out . So I took the others and went to the dining room. They didn't know English and so I was helping around. He was not there, but the nanny that he brought was there. The food was English (continental style) and you know they bring the plate [bring dish from left side] and so she took the whole plate. . I said it was not that way and so it was hilarious. Poor girl. Being from the village, they wouldn't know right? She was taking the whole plate and was going to eat from that. Alu Buzhang was clever. He didn't know [dining customs], but he was proud and if one taught him he would not like that. And since he didn't know [the customs], he thought it was best not to come to the dining room at all. Then they arrived here and via Kalimpong they went ahead.

Q

Went ahead to [Yadong](#)?

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A

Yes. I came later bringing a few of the young Chinese. I think they were bodyguards, 4 or 5 of them and one doctor.

Q

So you came to Calcutta?

A

Yes. I came via Calcutta. I had a lot of difficulties. Let me recall. I was returning later [from China] and there was a servant of [Trunyichemmo](#) Lhautara and a servant of Künsangtse [tib. kun bzang rtse]. So we were left behind as the Kungös had gone ahead. Now the two of them were saying that the Kungös have gone and they have been abandoned, and they are not going to take us. So I told them to please don't worry so much. I am with you and I will be taking you along with me. But did not believe in me and were very frightened. I showed them the air tickets and even though they did not know how to read, I pointed to the numbers on the ticket showing them the price of the ticket, the city of destination (which was Calcutta). But no matter how much I tried, they really did not believe me and were frightened. When we arrived at Calcutta and when it was time to deplane, they wouldn't get off. They said that this was not Calcutta and that they knew Calcutta. [They said] That they [Chinese] are just going to fool us and leave us here. This is some place in China. So I said, "Look out the window, there are Indians out there". They said, "No, No, it's not true. They are just tricking us". So they wouldn't get off . Now it was time for the plane to leave. People have to deplane and new passengers will be coming right? Finally, they saw somebody who had come to receive us and then they decided to get off the plane. Otherwise, they were not getting off saying that they were being tricked and that we knew the language and were going to leave them behind in some place in China and will never see Tibet again . Oh my, they were so worried that they were crying. No matter what I told them they did not believe it.

Q

Then from Calcutta?

A

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We came up to Kalimpong and then we had to get ready to go [to Tibet] right? At [Yadong](#), I think the Phari district head was Thargyela [tib. dar rgyas lags]. The monk official [monk official district head] was Chömphe! Sonamla [tib. chos 'phel bsod nams lags] who was from the shopkeeper family called Gyantse Tsongkhang [tib. rgyal rtse tshong khang] in Lhasa. He escaped in 1962 and is now dead. He had been the tea tax collector [tib. ja sho].

Q

He had a crew-cut, right?

A

Yes, sort of, small in stature and verbally eloquent [tib. zhal bde po].

Q

The one who was at Calcutta in the sixties?

A

Yes. That's the one. He was our guide of sorts. At that time, horses had to be readied and we had to go on horseback since there were no cars at that time. The young Chinese were aghast. Poor guys. They were not used to traveling on horses. Their asses hurt, and they were thrown off ; they had such difficulties. They had a small radio with them and whenever we got to our rest stop they put it in the middle of the table and played it. Poor villagers, they had not seen such a thing and so they used to gather around. So they (Chinese) used to be show-offish. So one day I teased them and told them not to do such things because one day one of our people will dislike such things and they might stone it and break it. And they will also stone your heads . So from the next day on they stopped doing that . Otherwise, our people were just looking and they were playing it up as if our people were barbarians [tib. kla klo]. You know how our village people are? They had not seen such things, and they (the Chinese) were just showing off.

Q

When you were at Kalimpong, did you have any conversations?

A

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No, they had already left.

Q

What about with the ones who were staying in Kalimpong? Like [Shakabpa](#).

A

They would have spoken, right? Among ourselves. There was nothing to talk to the Chinese about. At that time the Trade Representative [tib. tshong don] was Surkhang or Ganden Villa Khenjung. No, it was not Khenjung. I think it was Surkhang Depön. Surkhang Depön was a Trade Representative at Kalimpong. They [the 17-Point Agreement representatives] had already gone [to Tibet]. After we got to Lhasa, then Ngabö came up. Since he came overland, he came later, right? He must have come a month or two later. Ngabö was there, Zhang Jingwu and all were there. Then there was a reception and a dinner for the 17-Point Agreement. The Chinese had already established their residences at the new military camp, the Magar Sarpa [tib dmag sgar gsar pa]. They gave a dinner there and all that. That was in 1951.

I was a staff officer in the Foreign Office at that time. The office was taken over and merged with [the Chinese Foreign Office] and we moved to Sombü [tib. gzom phud]. Sursur Kungö had passed away and he was not there. Liushar was there. There was no one appointed to replace Sursur Kungö. All the other staff remained. There the work was done together with the Chinese and they opened all the documents and the treaties. There were a few Chinese cadres and the head was Yang Bangban. He understood a little English, but he could not speak. His wife knew some English. So I was there. In 1954 I went as part of the entourage when the Dalai Lama went down to China. Then he came up and in 1956 the Dalai Lama was invited by the Mahabodhi Society to attend the [Buddha Jayanti](#). He was thinking about going, but at first the Chinese made problems saying he cannot go. The late Dharma King, the Chögyal [tib. chos rgyal] of Sikkim, came to give him the invitation since he was the President or something of the Mahabodhi Society. I was the "liaison officer" [tib. sne shan]. So when he came, the Chinese made problems. The Chögyal had brought two jeeps and, you know, they made him actually get a driver's license! There was Chögyal and Phiku, who was an excellent driver, and they had to go through a test drive. At that time, they could manage to come from [Yadong](#) to Lhasa. They had to do both an oral and a driving test. The test was so difficult that Chögyal did not pass it. Phiku did. Chögyal passed the oral test, but not the driving test. But they told him



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that since he had come as a guest they will make a special exemption and give him a permit even though he did not pass it. He requested that he be permitted to visit Kongpo, so he went sightseeing for a day. During this period he said that the Namgyal [tib. rnam rgyal] Institute was going to be started and he requested some religious manuscripts. The Dalai Lama gave a whole set of excellent manuscripts. It was ordered at the Parkhang (Printing Press) and what they had was printed there. Others were brought together and hundreds of boxes were presented. At that time, the Chinese were not doing that much since they were going along with us. Later, there seems to be some regret. When the Dalai Lama was at Dharamsala and a certain text was requested, they didn't give it, you know. They thought that the Namgyal Institute might have it and I think they did have it, but they did not give it.

Q

Now in 1951, the Dalai Lama came from [Yadong](#) to Lhasa right? Later Ngabö came from Chamdo. Now when they all got together, there would have to be some discussions about the 17-Point Agreement. I can't tell you the details, but at that time the Assembly was called and it is said that Ngabö said that there was no way out but to accept the 17-Point Agreement.

A

You mean he explained about the Agreement?

Q

Yes. What were the discussions at that time? Did Ngabö speak with the Kashag and did the Kashag call the Assembly meeting? How was it?

A

I just can't recall that. I don't remember any Assembly meeting.

Q

What I heard was that at the Assembly meeting Ngabö gave a very long talk and said that there was no other choice. Then later, the Dalai Lama was informed that there was no way out except to accept the 17-Point Agreement and so the Dalai Lama had to send a telegram to China saying that he accepted the 17-Point Agreement.

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A

I don't think so; it would not come about [like that].

Q

It is said that Lhautara has written that in his book.

A

I don't believe in what Lhautara said. It cannot be so, because at that time that was not the way things operated. If this was done then it would seem that it was done in a democratic system. Yes, in Tibet we did have the Full Assembly (tib. [tsondu](#) gyendzom [tshogs 'du rgyas 'dzoms]) that included the monks and the lay people [tib. lha sde mi sde]. Besides government officials, there were the various craftsmen and educated people and people's representatives, etc. So when this [Assembly] meets its almost like a parliament. So in Tibet at this time [the actual time of 17-Point Agreement] this was not put into practice. The reason being, and this is my opinion, mind you; and I cannot say whether it is true or not. As I see it, the way things functioned at that time, in the first place without authorization it is not possible for them to sign it [the Agreement], right? At least they would not have had the guts to do it, right? Or else, they had to agree to sign it, but first had to consult [with Yadong] and then return and sign, right? But this did not take place and they signed, right? Or else, as a condition, they should have said that they were going to sign it and then consult and when everything was finalized we will send you a telegram which will settle the matter. I can't recall any such thing happening.

Secondly, after they came to [Yadong](#) and consulted with the Dalai Lama, then they would have sent it from there. The reason being that the government is taken care of by the Kashag with the Dalai Lama as the head. Therefore the Kashag hands out the plans and the Dalai Lama gives the approval [tib. phyag rtags]. So that's the custom and it would be decided right there. So there was no custom of consulting the people and calling an Assembly meeting. Now if there was some emergency situation where the people are consulted, for example, like at the time when the Chinese invaded Chamdo, a National Assembly [tib. rgyal yongs tshogs 'du chen po] was called. So at that meeting they said the Chinese had invaded and Chamdo had fallen and so there are a lot of difficulties and so what should we do? That we can't be responsible for the Dalai Lama safety here [at Lhasa]. So at that time, since it was an emergency situation, they could express their

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opinions, and some did, saying that we should fight. They used to say that they would fight until all the men are dead and only the women were left [tib. pho zad mo la thug ]. It was easy to say such things, poor guys, but they didn't know what the situation was down there about who was stronger and who had the capabilities. One sees one's own side as big and the other as small. It's just that they didn't know. So there were such statements made and it was just their opinions. In reality, the people who knew a bit should do something; and so they knew that it was not possible to fight and so that's how the talks came about. So it was said that the same happened in the case of Reting [a General Assembly was called].

However, I never saw the calling of an Assembly meeting at Lhasa at this time, but it might have happened before I got to Lhasa. I never saw it at all.

Anyway, there was no way of saying what all people think. There was no option. If you signed it, good; if not, then they will come, right? So therefore one tried to peacefully get as much as possible. Other than that there was no other alternative.

Q

Anyway, it is said that Lhautara wrote something.

A

Lhautara will write everything from the Chinese point of view. Whatever the Chinese told him to write, he would do it. Because he stayed with the Chinese doing whatever they asked of him [tib. bka' gsung ci sgrub], the Dalai Lama used to say, "Poor fellow! he had no choice." But the Dalai Lama is a Bodhisattva [tib. byang 'chub sems dpa'] and he (Lhautara) was either desperate or his life was in danger or whatever. But from our point of view, it was rather low of him [tib. byabs chung]. The reason being, if he had to do that much, he is one who sort of should not be able to live among Tibetans. If one hands over one's country and people and does things only for one's livelihood, then that person would be considered rather useless, right? He couldn't adhere to the karmic law of this life and the future life. [tib. 'di phyi gnyis kyi las 'bras] On the one hand, he was a monk official, and secondly he had the rank of a [Trunyichemmo](#). The Chinese were giving a hard time to everybody and not only to him, right?

So there had to be some, what should I say, outlook of Tibetaness. Besides he was a monk official. And from all aspects, it will not go well from the point of karmic law. One should say what is and what is not. Sure the Chinese are giving [him] a hard time, but they were giving a hard time to everybody, not just him. So from our point of view, he

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was a hopeless case [tib. thabs skyo po]. Besides, he was an educated person and not some poor or uneducated person who can't tell the difference between good and bad. So whatever he has written, I never accept because whatever the Chinese told him to do he would do it without any hesitation.

So from the time the Dalai Lama came [to India], we were making an argument that the 17-Point Agreement was signed under duress. So the Chinese needed to show that this was not the case. Like a tool, Ngabö was there and [Lhautara] was there and so in order to prove otherwise, it would be good to say things like that. That it was not just us, but the Dalai Lama was consulted and the general assembly went into session and they agreed and so it was the agreement of all the people of Tibet and not just a few of us. So they need to show this to the world. So he has definitely done that.

Q

After you came to Lhasa, did you return to the Foreign Office?

A

[The Foreign Office] became separate. This was mentioned in the points [of the Agreement] and so they took over. They appointed a head and as an assistant there was Kungö Liushar and some of us staff members. All the documents are in Tibetan, right? There was a Baba interpreter and there was another who knew Nepalese. Then Yang Bangban. There were 6 or 7 Chinese cadres and the office was located separately [different from Tibetan Foreign Office]. Sombü House was rented. At that time, and at first, the Chinese were being very nice, but then they were showing me their attitude [tib. rnam 'gyur]. The reason for this was because I had been educated abroad and knew [English] and it was obvious that we were going to have some relations with [Dekyilingka](#) and the Nepalese, isn't it? Especially at [Dekyilingka](#) where there were Sikkimese and Indians. And sometimes when contacts were made, they had facilities to send such things as wireless telegraph messages [tib. rlung 'phrin], right? Then there were people who we knew earlier from India. So when we had contacts with them, the Chinese did not like this at all. So they were always giving their opinions about this. Sometimes they used to call the workers together and start giving advice about how to make relations with foreign countries and what the procedures were. Actually what they were pointing out was that it is not permissible to have contacts with the Nepalese and [Dekyilingka](#). They were saying this.

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So things went on like that and then one day they stated their opinion of me. They did not tell me directly, but they told Liushar, "Sandu Rinchen is having contacts with [Dekyilingka](#) and the Nepalese and this is not alright. If he does that, then, he cannot work in the Foreign Office." So one day Liushar told me to come to his house and I did. He said, "Now the Chinese are saying such things and so it seems that something is not quite right." I said, "I am not having contacts with them regarding any government matters. That will be done by the office itself. I have friends and acquaintances there from a long time ago. I have the freedom to continue those relations and it is my wish, so there is no reason for them to prevent me from doing so. If I am really doing something that is harmful to the government work, then what I did is not correct. If the Chinese are saying such things then I don't want to work here any more. Besides, regarding my work here at the Foreign office, I am a person appointed by the Tibetan government and I am not paid and told by the Chinese that I am a staff official at the Foreign Office. I am not such an appointee and so I don't want to work there at all."

Secondly, they were saying that I am doing trading business. Yes, I was trading, but I am allowed to do trading. The reason being that I am not a Tibetan Government Kudrag [aristocrat] with a manorial estate. As a special privilege, the government gave me a rank and gave me official status. But there is no way I can make a living by working for the government. Our family are traders and I make my living by trading and so this I have to do. So if the Chinese are saying such things, then I will not accept it and so I don't want to work for the Foreign Office. So you Kungö please report to the Kashag that such a situation has developed regarding [Sandu](#) Rinchen and so since I have been appointed as a government servant, I will serve the Tibetan government in whatever office I am appointed. If there are no [other] appointments, then that's it and then I will just stay home and trade, but this Chinese work I never wanted to do it." So [afterwards] he (Liushar) said that he requested this to the Kashag and they said that it is as I have requested and so I have now been appointed as the officer in charge of transportation [tib. 'grim 'grul do dam pa]. This was a new office.

Q

What was this?

A

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It dealt with transportation. In 1956, the Dalai Lama went to India. At Jamshedpur [in Bihar] there was the Tata Mercedes company. The government bought 10 trucks from them so I was responsible for shipping these. [The trucks] were being used to transport government grain. And if there was no government work, then these trucks were hired out privately. My colleague was Ngawang Retröla [tib. ngag dbang rigs grol lags]. The staff official, poor thing, was [Trekhang] Kethubla [tib. skal thub lags] you know [Taring] Yanjenla's [tib. dbyangs can lags] husband. Anyway, that's how I left the Chinese work. The Chinese even at that time did not like me because when they did a lot of things like starting the Youth League, the Women's Association, schools like Seshing [tib. zas zhim] and schools for people to learn Tibetan, I never took interest in any of these things. [Shölkhang](#) Jedrungla and them [his type] always used to say I should join the Youth League and this and that, and I used to say okay, okay, I will see. So they [Chinese] knew that. They knew that I did not like the Chinese and their ideas. So That was the reason. I think that was the reason. It was easier for me because I didn't have to accommodate [tib. bstun] to the Chinese. It would have been difficult not to accommodate to Chinese since the government had asked me to work. I was a worker at the Foreign office and so we had to do work together, right? So anyway, I left the Chinese work. Later, when I wanted to go to India, they never gave me permission. Whoever wanted to go to India had to get permission from the Foreign Office. Earlier, we needed no permission. Later, the common people never understood this, but those who were a bit "better" like government officials could not go without a passport. So when I was doing some other work at the transport office it was already 1958, almost before the uprising.

The Kashag asked me to go to India regarding the work of the transport office and they gave me an edict. Since I used to work at the Foreign Office, I know the system, right. One needed a certificate [tib. ngos sbyor] from the Kashag. The Kashag will say this person is going to such place for this reason and so give him a pass. One had to get this letter from the Kashag.

This letter was taken to the Foreign Office where they would issue the pass. So they have to give me one right? But, no, they did not. They said they will not issue me a permit. Then one day from the United Front Bureau [tib. tong zhan bu] which belonged to the Internal Affairs office and the Intelligence office, there was this man called the Director Li [tib. li bu zhang] or something like that. He asked me to come and so I did. He said, "It seems that you are going for this purpose and have requested a permit. Is that right?" I said, "Yes, its correct." He said, "Now regarding your permit, I had a talk with the Foreign Office

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and we can't give you a permit because these days the [Chushigandru](#) bandit Khambas, are making a lot of trouble on the road to India and so there is danger to your life. . So it is not so good for you to go." So that's what they said! So I said, "You don't have to tell me whether there is danger to my life or not. I was told to go by the Kashag and I am a government official. I have also worked at the Foreign Office. I have also seen other countries. So when it comes time to get a permit, there is never any custom which says that they have to take the responsibility of the person's life. A permit is something that is used when one country recognizes another and says our person is going to this country for this business and so please extend your help. So this is what a permit says and there is no custom which says that if this person takes this permit and if there is danger to his life then we will be responsible. So there is never any custom like that. You don't have to take responsibility for my life. I have work to do, the work that the government asked me to do. So you give me the permit and I will even give you a written guarantee saying that I will be responsible for my own life. He said,"No, no, its not like that. You should not be in a hurry." Anyway, they never gave that permit. So, even if they did not give it, it is a government thing right? We still go to [Yadong](#), right? So I just left it at that and didn't get the permit. I said I don't need it and that I'll still go [Note: and he went]. So things like this, they were looking for what harm or hindrances [tib. gnod skyel] they could set up and they were very suspicious when we had any contact with foreigners. They behaved as if we might even be spies of the Indian government. That's how they were thinking.

Q

When did this permit thing begin? If an ordinary person like a villager just took off and went, then what?

A

They weren't even asked. They'll just go. When they got to [Yadong](#), there was a check point. In the old days we had the Office of the Governor of [Yadong](#), the [Yadong](#) Jikyab [tib. gro mo spyi khyab]. Opposite to that they had started an office. There are others roads but since that was the main route a check post was established. I don't think they said much to common persons. But those who were better off, they asked them where they were going and asked about their permit.

Q



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You mentioned that when you were working for the Transport Office you said that 10 trucks were bought to transport grain. Why were you transporting grain?

A

There were various government granaries [tib. bkar 'jug] all over. For example, for the granary at Shigatse, if grain was to be transported then the number of trucks and the place of destination would be mentioned. So the grain was transported by horse or mules or however to the closest motorable road and then transported [by truck]. So between Lhasa, Shigatse, Phari and Gyantse there were roads. Then towards Kongpo and towards the Nakchu side, at that time there were no roads.

Q

Earlier the [miser](#) used to carry it from one corvée transport station to another, and now you were transporting it by trucks because there were roads? Is that right?

A

Yes. It faster and easier. When there was no government transport work, then they [the trucks] were hired out.

Q

So these were bought in 1956 when [the Dalai Lama] came, right?

A

Yes, in 1956.

Q

Wherever the Dalai Lama went were you also there?

A

You mean in India?

Q

Yes.

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A

Yes, I was. It was towards the end of 1956. Perhaps the 10th or 11th month. At first, the Chinese stopped the Dalai Lama from going. Trijang [tib. khri byang] Rimpoche was sent as his representative. I was appointed as his staff officer and interpreter. So I was with Trijang Rimpoche and when we got to India - the ceremony in Delhi was to be in December I think. I think it was right after Trijang Rimpoche arrived in Kalimpong. It was at that time that it was said that it had been decided that the Dalai Lama will attend. So later the Chinese said it was okay for him to go. At that time I and Yuthok Jigmela [tib. g.yu thog 'jigs med lags] were the main English [interpreters]. Kapshö Thöndrubla [tib. ka shod don grub lags] was there, but he was not an official interpreter. He was there among the staff, but mainly he was acting as an agent for the Tibet Daily Newspaper [tib. bod ljongs nyin re'i tshags par] or something like that. Anyway, the newspaper was printed by the Chinese. He was a reporter. He was among the government officials, but they had appointed him [as a reporter]. Jigmela and I were doing the interpretation of the speeches and I think at that time the three of us were the only ones who knew English.

In 1957, in the 1st or 2nd month [the Dalai Lama] was to return. He stayed in Sikkim for a while and then went [to Lhasa] via the Natöla Pass. I was working with the truck purchases and Pandit Nehru presented [the Dalai Lama] with a yellow Ambassador car. So I went to get that. So all these were disassembled and transported on backs, and then reassembled at [Yadong](#). I did not return until around the 6th or 7th month [in 1957].

Q

When [the Dalai Lama] was in India there was a group saying that he should stay and another that he should leave? How did that happen?

A

Regarding that, we were not there. Only the elder Kungös (officials) [were involved].

Q

But what did you hear about it? Who were the ones who were saying that the Dalai Lama should stay?

A

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This is what happened: People like [Shakabpa](#) and Gyalola and their kind were saying that he should stay.

Q

The Kalimpong [group called Jenkhentsisum], the Dedön Tsokpa [tib. bde don tshogs pa] and others.

A

Yes. The Kalimpong Trade Representative. They were saying that it was a good opportunity and that [the Dalai Lama] should not return, and that the Chinese would not do anything good. It seems this is what they were saying. Now Ngabö and the other Kalöns were here - there was Ngabö, and Surkhang was there, and so was [Ragashag](#). I think they were the 3 Kalöns. Ngabö said that [the Dalai Lama] should not stay. That there is nothing [outside] and that it is better to return. I think he was saying that it would not be good if we end up in such an antagonistic [tib. 'khon 'gras chen po] situation. So there were two factions. Finally the oracle [Nechung](#) was also consulted. That I know clearly because I went to invite the [Nechung](#) medium. The [Nechung](#) medium was at that time staying in Kalimpong. He was not specifically brought for any reason. I don't remember him being part of the entourage. He may have come for a pilgrimage. Anyway he was in Kalimpong, and was ill with arthritis. The Dalai Lama was in Delhi.

So there were these talks going around [about what to do]. The Dalai Lama was traveling around to Bodh Gaya and other places. At that time, the most important angle of the talks was that Zhou Enlai was coming from China as a guest. He had probably come on an invitation, but mainly I think Thangsen [a Chinese lama, monk] had brought a relic of the Lord Buddha from India and this was being returned. This was to remain at Nalanda or something like that. Anyway, the ceremony took place there. So since Zhou Enlai had come there would be an opportunity to speak with him, right? So since it was important, the main reason why [the Dalai Lama] was asked not to return was that since the [signing of the] 17-Point Agreement, the bottom line was that power was gradually being robbed by the Chinese. Making changes, saying some things against and looking down [tib. mthong chung] on religion and the Tibetan customs. Politically, they were saying one can't do this and that; what should I say, they were increasing the pressure. So the thinking was that this is not good at all and gradually even to the Dalai Lama they were doing all kinds of reckless things [tib. [gang](#) byung mang byung]; always saying that they want to meet the

Dalai Lama and they are going to tell him this and that- that the Dalai Lama must do this and that, that orders have come from Beijing, etc, etc.

And so things were getting worse [in Tibet]. So they were thinking that [the Dalai Lama] should not go back; that if one studies the situation one can see clearly that they were gradually going to bring about a situation where the Dalai Lama was not going to have any power and where they were going to do anything [they wanted] with the Tibetan people. So with this thinking they thought that this time if the Dalai Lama stayed and asked the Indian government to discuss and think about the long term future [it would be good]. So it seems that that is what they were thinking. Kungö Chemmo [Phala][Drönyerchemmo] was also among those who were asking that [the Dalai Lama] should not return. So in this way it went back and forth, as is also a Tibetan custom. [He] is the protector of the Tibetan government[referring to Nechung], and so [Nechung](#) oracle was asked to come down. The Dalai Lama was in Bodh Gaya or someplace. [He said] that I should go immediately and fetch [Nechung](#) oracle.

So I went and arrived there late in the night. I told the [Nechung](#) medium that he has to leave early the next morning and that I will inform the hospital. He was consulting some doctor and I informed the doctor. That night we packed. During this period, I don't think the medium was without his entourage because he had all the oracle dress, etc. Immediately the next morning. since the Bagdogra flight was very early, we left around 6 or so and I think we had some car problem or something. No we did not have car trouble. When we got to Bagdogra, the Bagdogra flight was late. As soon as we got to Calcutta we had to take the flight to Delhi, right? So we were not going to be able to make the connecting flight. I had a definite schedule and I was told that I had to go today and must return [to Delhi] the day after tomorrow. So at Bagdogra, I immediately went to the flight superintendent and told them that they have to send a message to Calcutta since this is a very important matter. You have to give VIP treatment and must delay the Calcutta flight. That we have to arrive there tonight and that this is an order of the Indian government. So I said this and they did stop the flight [from leaving on schedule]. So we arrived there that night and the following morning [Nechung](#) was consulted. What was advised we would not know, right?

Finally, with talks going back and forth, it seems that Nehru advised and said that it would be alright and that he will tell Zhou Enlai and that it was not possible that the [Chinese] will do that such things. So regarding these things, it was better for you all to return and it won't be good for you to stay here. So this is what [Nehru] told Zhou Enlai and the latter at

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that time sort of guaranteed saying that the peaceful liberation can be extended for as long as possible and that as long as you wish.

Q

The reforms you mean.

A

Yes, the reforms. That it can be extended as long as you all [Tibetans] wanted. So under that assurance, the return was finalized. So at that time there were a lot of discussions back and forth.

Q

So after the return, did things improve?

A

After the guarantee, I doubt that there was much improvement. We don't know that much, as mainly the Kashag [was involved]. The Chinese would immediately go to the Kashag and if the Kashag was not cooperative, they would say we are going to the Dalai Lama. They will call up [phone] immediately and say that they need to meet him. So they will do things at the upper level and the rest really won't understand. So they [Chinese] were really not regarding [tib. brtsi 'gro] him highly. Then they were trying out new tactics saying that he has to attend the "National People's Congress" [tib. rgyal yongs [tshog](#) chen]. So they had already started putting a little pressure on this issue. This was just before the uprising. So they were saying that he must to go. So now suspicions grew and [people started thinking], "Oh, now if he goes down [to Beijing] they will not allow him to return." Previously he went for a tour but at that time they were not starting to do reforms and did things diplomatically [tib. mkhas po]. And so the situation was getting worse and worse.

Regarding [Chushigandru](#), there is Jujen Thubten [tib. 'ju chen thub bstan] in Dharamsala, he knows a lot.

Q

Was he in [Chushigandru](#)?

A

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Yes, Yes. [Chushigandru](#) has published three books. The internal problems of the [Chushigandru](#), when they broke off into two groups, he was one of them. So if one asks him he can tell you clearly the perspective from their side. Not only the other side. So if you listen to both sides, they you will know the situation.

Q

When you say later, you mean after 1959?

A

Yes, after 1959. In Mustang. There were a lot of internal problems and killings. I think it was before that- no after that- [Chushigandru](#) has "published" 3 books. Everything is in those books from beginning to end. What they did and the internal situation. And there were so many problems within [Chushigandru](#), about money and the "yellow tent" [tib. gur ser po]. They have even written a lot about the Tibetan government's gold and silver. They got a lot of information.

Q

Mainly, this history book is to cover up to 1959.

A

They have written since the time the organization started.

Q

Who wrote this book?

A

Their office.

Q

The one in Delhi, right?

A

They must have it, and those who worked in it also have it.

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Q

What I heard was that they were compiling a book.

A

They have already written it, three books.

Q

So it's printed and published.

Q

A Guest: The printing was good?

A

Yes, it was good, but its been quite a few years and who knows where it is now, and how many are around. I don't know about Athar, but Radru Ngawang [tib. dbra phrug ngag dbang] was definitely there.

Q

What was said to be the main reason for the revolt in Kham?

A

The Chinese reforms. And even regarding religion, you know, the Chinese never cared about this saying that religion is bad. The talk at that time was that at [Dartsedo](#) the Chinese strongly criticized religion in a newspaper which said something about Lord Buddha. It said that the Tibetans are being fooled by the religion of the Buddha. The Buddha is just the son of a King who had a new idea on how to exploit the masses. Actually it was just to get a name for oneself and to get power and wealth. So it was a new method to fool people. So after this, people were aghast [tib. hon 'thor]. So when this information reached the Lhasa area, it was said that this will not come about and they didn't believe it. People said that even in the Kashag they had such discussions about this. So it seems that the Chinese definitely printed that. So when they said such things, just from the religious point of view, the people would be extremely upset right? Because in the minds of the people they had so much faith in religion. Even if they did not understand it



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much they had strong beliefs. Then from the way work was done, they are of course going to make a lot of changes, right? The various offices and they would say you have to do this and that and people would not be happy doing this and it would be like forcing them. You may call it old tradition if you like, but the people there are not the type who would easily do what they were told and they greatly valued their freedom. They have always lived that way and their minds are shortsighted or short-tempered [tib. 'dum 'dum] and they thought, "Oh! we have got to fight, there's nothing to it. Even if we don't succeed we will be able to kill some." So they would decide in this way and scatter into groups. They did not have the time to organize as a group with a leader and an able policy, nor would it be easy to find someone who would do that [implication: because of their way of life]. So each went about in their own groups and friends and trusted ones, killing the Chinese and then retreating. The Chinese would immediately know and they sent the army. So in this way the [various skirmishes] increased. That's how it started.

Q

In the lower regions [tib. mdo smad] where were the main battles fought?

A

It seems it was all over. I can't tell you of one or two. It was everywhere and it spread all over. People hear about revolts and knowing their own situation it spreads. Now I haven't heard anything about Ba [tib. 'ba'], otherwise it seems like it was happening everywhere.

Q

What was the reason for the Chinese to be so anxious about doing the reforms in these areas?

A

Whether one calls it an urgency or not, the Chinese also first came to the East. Oh! and there is this also. The Chinese were also confiscating arms. Now for the Khambas, to surrender one's arms is considered terrible. They will not agree to that, right? So this was also a big problem. So that was one of the main causes. Now the Khambas will consider guns almost more important than life (laughter); they won't hand them in that easily. They will say, "Now this I can't give."

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Q

Horses and guns?

A

Yes. They will say, "The horse and gun is more important than life; why should we give that up."

Q

In my mind, from one perspective, the Chinese Government seems to be saying that the reforms are not important that this can be done gradually. What Mao said was that when the time came, things will change of their own accord. So there was this talk.

A

I don't think so.

Q

There was talk about delaying reforms right?

A

Yes.

Q

On the other hand, there seems to be some urgency to do reforms.

A

No. No.

Q

Were there reforms?

A

The reforms in those lower areas and in Lhasa were totally different. Those areas did not have a government like the central Tibetan government (tib. Ü Shung [dbus gzhung]),

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and the political setup like the Tibetan Government was [absent]. Early on it was said that there was Gyadey [tib. rgya sde] [China land] and Bödey [tib. bod sde] [Tibet land]. These areas stayed as if they were both part and not-part of China. They remained like "small chiefdoms" [tib. dpon khag]. It was very easy since they didn't have much of an organization. So when the Chinese made reforms in China these areas just went along with too.[just did it along with the main areas]. Now in the Central Tibetan area, there was a 17-Point Agreement so they couldn't do whatever they liked and they had to adhere to it. Though they wanted to do the reforms and that was their plan, however, like footsteps, it had to be done gradually. In the lower regions there was nothing for them to hesitate or take into consideration. It was as if they were just taking a part of China and whatever was done in China they just did that. And when they came up [to these areas] they sort of immediately started offices and said you have to do this and things like that arms have to be handed in [these were ordered].

In Tibet, it was not that way. Take for example Ü and Lhasa. They can't take the arms. Earlier, the government used to issue a permit number. I don't remember the Chinese telling the Tibetan government that arms have to be handed in. The reason being that we had guns and we kept them. I think the Chinese were saying that, but they did not put it into practice. So they were treading carefully [tib. bzo po] and slowly. In the [Eastern areas] they just did it.

Q

In the 17-Point Agreement they did not talk about a border, right?

A

No, nothing.

Q

I mean that the areas in Kham were under this or that.

A

No. Most probably not. If that was the case, then they had to include a map, right? So it seems that they had sort of left it the old way. The question of this and that side of the Yangtse River. Later, the Chinese even got rid of that, because they took out Chamdo. They said that Chamdo has been forcefully liberated. Actually Chamdo was part of Tibet

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since Chamdo is this side of Yangtse River. The Doji is also the governor of the Tibetan Government. When the 17-Point Agreement was implemented, Chamdo was already taken.

Q

Why did they come up to Chamdo?

A

They decided to come up to Chamdo. That area was large and there were some border troops who did some fighting. So they came militantly. Once the main district was taken, then things were much easier, right? Then from there they said that it was better to allow them to come up peacefully, otherwise they will send to bring the army in. So they were making people scared.

Q

So in Kham and [Amdo](#) areas there was a lot of commotion and people started coming up in Lhasa. When was that?

A

This was I think about 1955-56. It was soon after the Dalai Lama returned from China.

Q

Did a lot come up?

A

Not an astonishing amount. They were coming in groups. Some stayed at Lhasa others went to India. After [Chushigandru](#) was established, many joined it.

Q

Now when a lot of the Kham and [Amdo](#) people were at Lhasa were the Chinese saying anything?

A

They were suspecting.

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Q

Were they checking or doing something?

A

The Chinese had spies everywhere and they used to watch a lot. They used to see how many were coming, where they were going, what they were doing. Take for example Lhasa itself. They were even suspicious about us. This was after Nyendrala left. They raided us. At that time, we had not finished the construction of our house and we had a large courtyard. About 10 soldiers with guns pointed entered.

Mrs. [Sandutsang](#) said: It was in the apartment surrounding the courtyard, (tib. shagor [shag sgor)).

Yes we were sitting in the shagor and 10 soldiers with guns pointed came running in. The reason they gave was that they were after a thief who ran this way and they came to arrest him. So they asked if we saw the thief. So we said we never saw any thief.

Mrs. [Sandutsang](#): They looked around the garage.

They came inside the house and looked in the barrage and behind the cupboards. Actually they needed to know if there were any arms, who was there and how many. Somebody must have said something - like people were meeting or some [Chushigandru](#) people have come. It seems they had some reason for suspicion. So they suddenly barged in and told a lie that a thief entered inside. To some at the outskirts of Lhasa it was said they said that a horse was lost. If a horse was lost then there is no need to look in the cupboard . So stupid were these soldiers. Looking under the table . Of course a horse is not going to come into the house and enter a cupboard or go under a table . So they just made lame excuses. And it seems that they did this when they had suspicions. Anyway, they came to see us. I was there. And I think my late brother was there. I think he had taken ill at that time. We were Khambas and so we had a lot of relations and they thought we had something to do with [Chushigandru](#).

Q

How did the [Chushigandru](#) first begin? It was said that they could not remain at Lhasa and they had to go out some place. What was going on? Couldn't they remain in Lhasa?

A

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The way it began. They did not start in Lhasa. Of course there would be some talk in Lhasa. Andru Dzasa [Gombo Tashi] and others had stronger relations towards India. A base had to be made at a more remote area where there were not many Chinese. Then at Lhasa there were Khambas who thought alike and gradually they communicated among themselves and slowly in groups they left Lhasa. They did this without attracting much attention from the Chinese. Then they started an organization. I think that's how they did it.

Q

Was Andru Dzasa in India at that time?

A

I think he also came to India.

Q

When was this?

A

I wonder when. Maybe around the end of 1957.

Q

What I heard was that by 1956 the airdrops of people had been made.

A

No, not then. It was much later. Some were taken there and trained. It is not possible without first training to parachute, right? So they were trained in wireless operations. They also had to make definite plans on where they were going to drop, since they had to pick up the goods. [Chushigandru](#) would have to send people and if there were some problems then they had to have alternate plans. So it cannot be in 1956. Even if they had started the work then, they could only implement it later. [Note: the first parachute drop was in October 1957]

Q

Who else was there in Kalimpong to organize the [Chushigandru](#).

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A

At that time, I wonder if Nyendrala [his brother] was there. Later, for some reason he went to Lhoka and then returned to this side [India] and then went back again. It was the second time that he could not go. I wonder if it was the time when he was in Bhutan - after the Dalai Lama left-- I can't remember. Anyway, from our side there were 38 people. They had a lot of their arms confiscated by the Indian Government. Maybe that was later. There is some note around here someplace. They had to hand in the guns and they had to get a receipt from the Indian government. Everyone got a receipt with the serial numbers written on it. Nyendrala, after he came to India, what was it? [he can't recall what he wanted to say]